

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LISBON 06113 171232Z
ACTION HA-05

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 6113

USUN FOR AMBASSADOR MCHENRY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF ICEM UNHCR AO PO
SUBJ: REPATRIATION OF ANGOLAN REFUGEES BEGINS

REF: (A) GENEVA 11860 (NOTAL) (B) LISBON 5557 (NOTAL)
(C) GENEVA 11117 (NOTAL) (D) STATE 161495 (NOTAL)
(E) GENEVA 10623 (NOTAL) (F) STATE 206414 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY:
THE INITIAL FLIGHT OF A BIWEEKLY AIRLIFT REPATRIATED 260
ANGOLAN REFUGEES DURING THE FIRST WEEK IN AUGUST. A TOTAL
OF 2347 REFUGEES HAVE REGISTERED FOR RETURN, BUT THE POTENTIAL
NUMBER OF RETURNEES IS MUCH GREATER. ANY USG CONTRIBUTIONS WE MIGHT
BE ABLE TO MAKE TO ICEM TO ASSIST THE REPATRIATION EFFORT
WOULD, WE BELIEVE, SERVE SEVERAL US INTERESTS, INCLUDING
HUMANITARIAN INTERESTS. END SUMMARY.
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PAGE 02 LISBON 06113 171232Z

1. AIRLIFT BEGINS:
THE INITIAL FLIGHT OF A BIWEEKLY AIRLIFT REPATRIATED 260
ANGOLAN REFUGEES FROM PORTUGAL DURING THE FIRST WEEK IN
AUGUST. THE FIRST GROUP INCLUDED TEACHERS, MECHANICS,
CARPENTERS, RESTAURANT WORKERS, AND CLERKS. (COMMENT:
THE ANGOLAN AMBASSADOR TO PORTUGAL TOLD ICEM REPRESENTATIVE

THAT PRIORITY WILL BE GIVEN TO THE REPATRIATION OF SKILLED REFUGEES. HOWEVER, NO REFUGEES WILL BE REFUSED EXCEPT FOR THOSE WHO WORKED AGAINST THE MPLA GOVERNMENT.) UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE IN PORTUGAL CUILHERME CUNHA ANNOUNCED THAT 2347 REFUGEES HAVE REGISTERED FOR REPATRIAION THUS FAR. OF THOSE REGISTERED, ABOUT 60 PERCENT ARE BLACK, 20 PERCENT WHITE, AND 10 PERCENT MULATTO.

2. JOINT PROJECT:

DETAILS OF THE REPATRIATION, ONE OF THE RESULTS OF THE JUNE SUMMIT BETWEEN PRESIDENTS EANES AND NETO, HAVE BEEN WORKED OUT BY THE GOP AND THE ANGOLAN EMBASSY IN LISBON. ICEM AND UNHCR ARE FUNDING AIRLIFT COSTS, WHILE THE GOP PAYS TRANSPORTATION TO LISBON AND EXCESS BAGGAGE CHARGES. AIRLIFT PRIORITY IS GIVEN TO REFUGEES WHO HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO OBTAIN FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE GOP. BOTH ICEM AND MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD US THE BILATERAL WORKING GROUP MEMBERS HAVE ENJOYED WARM AND CORDIAL RELATIONS. EACH SIDE HAS GONE OUT OF ITS WAY TO FACILITATE THE REPATRIATION. FOR EXAMPLE, THE WORKING GROUP RESOLVED PROBLEMS POSED BY THE FACT THAT NONE OF THE FIRST 260 REPATRIATES POSSESSED DOCUMENTS EITHER TO LEAVE PORTUGAL OR TO ENTER ANGOLA.

3. POTENTIAL:

ALTHOUGH 2347 HAVE THUS FAR REGISTERED TO RETURN, THE
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PAGE 03 LISBON 06113 171232Z

POTENTIAL NUMBER OF RETURNEES IS MUCH HIGHER. THE ANGOLAN NEWS AGENCY ANGOP ESTIMATES 7000 ANGOLANS HAVE FLED THE COUNTRY SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE CIVIL WAR. CUNHA, HOWEVER, ESTIMATED THE NUMBER OF ANGOLANS IN PORTUGAL INCLUDING REFUGEES AND THOSE WHO CAME SEEKING WORK AT ABOUT 10,000. A SUBSTANTIAL REDUCTION OF THIS NUMBER WOULD ALLEVIATE GOP UNEMPLOYMENT, HOUSING, AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS.

4. COMMENT:

THE REPATRIATION OF MORE REFUGEES THAN THOSE NOW REGISTERED WILL DEPEND ON SEVERAL FACTORS, THE MOST IMPORTANT OF WHICH IS HOW THE FIRST RETURNEES ARE TREATED IN ANGOLA. IF, AS THE GPRA HAS PROMISED, THEY ARE WELL TREATED AND FIND HOUSING AND WORK, OTHERS ARE LIKELY TO FOLLOW. A SUBSTANTIAL SHIFT SHOULD SERVE BOTH PORTUGUESE AND ANGOLAN ECONOMIES, AS WELL AS ESTABLISHING AN IMPORTANT PRECEDENT FOR POLITICAL COOPERATION. AS REPORTED REFTELS (A-E), ICEM AND UNHCR WILL BE SEEKING ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR THE REPATRIATION EFFORT. ANY CONTRIBUTION WE MIGHT EVENTUALLY MAKE TO ICEM TO HELP THE REPATRIATION EFFORT SHOULD SERVE US INTERESTS, INCLUDING OUR COMPASSIONATE HUMANITARIAN INTEREST IN HELPING THE RETURNEES FIND DECENT, PERMANENT HOMES. IN ADDITION,

PORTUGAL'S AFRICAN POLICIES PARALLEL OUR OWN, AND WE WANT
TO MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE ALREADY-PRODUCTIVE USG-GOP
EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION ON ANGOLA.
ROWELL

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